

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PC-01 AID-05 OMB-01 IO-10

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SSC-01 /080 W

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P R 141635Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5133

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGUI

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSULATE DOUALA VIA POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 0485

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CM

SUBJECT: AHIDJO ACCEPTS NOMINATION FOR ANOTHER PRESIDENTIAL TERM,  
CALLS FOR CREATION OF PRIME MINISTER POST

REF: YAOUNDE 467 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY: TO NO ONE'S SURPRISE, NATIONAL POLITICAL BUREAU OF CAMEROON NATIONAL UNION (UNC) HAS NOMINATED AHIDJO AS PARTY'S CANDIDATE FOR ANOTHER FIVE-YEAR TERM AS CAMEROON'S PRESIDENT. IN ACCEPTING NOMINATION BEFORE ENTHUSIASTIC PARTY CONGRESS, AHIDJO CALLED FOR AMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION TO CREATE POST OF PRIME MINISTER. MADE CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT GURC WOULD REMAIN VERY MUCH PRESIDENTIAL REGIME, THAT PRESIDENT WOULD STILL BE HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, AND THAT PRIME MINISTER WOULD FUNCTION AS COORDINATOR WITH POWERS DELEGATED BY PRESIDENT AND SERVING AT PRESIDENT'S PLEASURE. END SUMMARY.

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2. AFTER RECESS FOR YOUTH DAY CELEBRATIONS FEB 11 (REFTEL),

UNC CONGRESS RECONVENED FEB 12 TO HEAR PRESIDENT AHIDJO'S KEY-NOTE SPEECH. IN COMPREHENSIVE FIVE-HOUR TALK, AHIDJO SUMMED UP CAMEROON'S ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE FIRST UNC NATIONAL CONGRESS (MARCH 1969 IN GAROUA) AND OUTLINED PLANS FOR FUTURE. SPEECH, WHICH WAS MODERATE AND CONTAINED NO RPT NO DRAMATIC DEPARTURES, BEING REPORTED SEPTTEL.

3. PARTY CONGRESS CONTINUED FEB 12 AND 13 WITH SESSIONS DEVOTED TO REPORTS BY HEADS OF VARIOUS UNC NATIONAL POLITICAL BUREAU SECRETARIATS (POLITICAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, TREASURY, ETC.), BY WOMEN'S AND LABOR ORGANIZATIONS (OFUNC AND UNTC), AND BY PRESIDENTS OF UNC'S FORTY-PLUS REGIONAL SECTIONS. TEXTS NOT RPT NOT YET AVAILABLE.

4. REMAINDER OF CONGRESS PROGRAM CALLED FOR: CLOSED SESSIONS FEB 14 TO DRAFT AND ADOPT RESOLUTIONS; AND CLOSED SESSION EARLY MORNING FEB 15 TO ELECT NEW NATIONAL POLITICAL BUREAU FOLLOWED BY PUBLIC SESSION MID-MORNING FEB 15 TO PRESENT NEW POLITICAL BUREAU, ANNOUNCE RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED, AND CLOSE CONGRESS.

5. IN OBVIOUSLY PRE-PLANNED "SURPRISE" MOVE FEB 13, NATIONAL POLITICAL BUREAU, EXERCISING ITS POWER TO NOMINATE PARTY'S CANDIDATES FOR ELECTIONS, NOMINATED AHIDJO FOR NEW MANDATE AS CAMEROON'S PRESIDENT. SPECIAL PLENARY SESSION WAS THEN HELD MORNING FEB 14 AT WHICH PARTY CONGRESS ENDORSED POLITICAL BUREAU'S DECISION AND AHIDJO, TO NO ONE'S SURPRISE, ACCEPTED NOMINATION.

6. IN ACCEPTANCE SPEECH, AHIDJO REFERRED TO HIS 17-YEAR STEWARDSHIP OF CAMEROON, RECALLED EARLIER STATEMENTS THAT HE DID NOT RPT NOT INTEND TO REMAIN IN OFFICE FOREVER, AFFIRMED THAT HE DID NOT RPT NOT CONSIDER HIMSELF INDISPENSABLE, BUT AGREED TO REMAIN FOR ANOTHER TERM IN RESPONSE TO POPULAR APPEAL AND BEST INTERESTS OF NATION. ANNOUNCED AT SAME TIME THAT IN QUEST FOR EFFICIENCY HE WOULD REQUEST CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO CREATE POST OF PRIME MINISTER, WHILE STRESSING CAMEROON WOULD RETAIN PRESIDENTIAL REGIME WITH PRESIDENT REMAINING AS BOTH HEAD OF STATE AND HEAD OF GOVERNMENT AND ASSURING NATIONAL UNITY AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION. PRESIDENT WOULD DELEGATE NECESSARY POWERS TO PRIME MINISTER TO COORDINATE, CONTROL AND ANIMATE GOVERNMENTAL ACTION. PM WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE TO  
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PRESIDENT AND HOLD OFFICE AT PRESIDENT'S DISCRETION. AHIDJO ALSO ANNOUNCED, WITHOUT ELABORATION, THAT UNC PARTY ORGANIZATION WOULD BE REFORMED TO CREATE A CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

7. COMMENT:

A. PRE-CONGRESS BUILD-UP HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT AHIDJO INTENDED TO ACCEPT NEW PRESIDENTIAL MANDATE (YAOUNDE 232, 386).

B. CREATION OF PRIME MINISTER POST WAS ALSO FORESEEN AS

CREDIBLE POSSIBILITY (YAOUNDE A-20, 386). IN PART, THIS COULD BE AHIDJO'S RESPONSE, ALBEIT AN APPARENTLY COSMETIC ONE, TO A MEASURE OF DISCONTENT AT HIS ONE-MAN DOMINANCE; IN PART, IT COULD BE A SELF-INITIATED EFFORT TO LIGHTEN ROUTINE BURDENS OF OFFICE WITHOUT GIVING UP ANY REAL POWER. WHATEVER THE MOTIVATION, HE HAS MADE IT CLEAR HE INTENDS TO REMAIN IN CHARGE.

C. ALTHOUGH DETAILS ARE LACKING, CREATION OF UNC CENTRAL COMMITTEE COULD BE SIGNIFICANT STEP TOWARD ENHANCING PARTY'S ROLE AS KEY FORCE IN CAMEROONIAN BODY POLITIC, SINCE NATIONAL POLITICAL BUREAU AS PRESENTLY ORGANIZED HAS TOO MANY STRUCTURAL SHORTCOMINGS (YAOUNDE A-20).

D. NORMAL EXPECTATION WOULD HAVE BEEN FOR NEW NATIONAL POLITICAL BUREAU (TO BE ELECTED FEB 15) RATHER THAN PRESENT "LAME DUCK" BUREAU TO NOMINATE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, THOUGH NEW BUREAU WILL BE AS MUCH AHIDJO'S TOOL AS OLD ONE WAS AND ITS "CHOICE" WOULD BE THE SAME. BUT ADVANTAGE PROBABLY SEEN IN OBTAINING ENDORSEMENT OF NOMINATION BY ENTIRE NATIONAL CONGRESS AND CASTING NOMINATIONS PROCESS IN HOOPLA OF THIS MAJOR POPULAR EVENT.

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